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INFLUENTIAL PERSONS
AND MENOMINEE EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

This is the eleventh in a series of reports on Menominee Indians and their education compiled by the Training Center for Community Programs at the University of Minnesota. The data for these reports were gathered in 1969. In this, the last of eleven interim reports, we wish to cover materials gathered from "influential persons" -- people from various backgrounds with opinions and influence regarding the education of Menominee children. We will review and analyze the opinions of parents, principals and administrators, counselors, committee members, and persons related to federal education programs. Our approach is to let the respondents speak for themselves.

SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS: MENOMINEE VIEWPOINTS

As in the case of most other Indian reservations with public school systems, school-community relations tend to be viewed by local Indians as incomplete or frustrating. Menominee County with its public and parochial (1) schools is no exception to the generalization. The Menominee president of the PTA in Keshena and Neopit:

You see, when we have our meetings in Keshena, then the Keshena teachers come and the Neopit teachers stay away. The Neopit people hardly ever come down to the Keshena meetings. But at the same time, the parents that are very faithful about coming to the PTA meetings are usually the ones that don't have trouble with their children in school. In the years past, when the PTA first started, it was more of a fighting situation -- the teachers would line up on one side of the gym, and the parents on the other, and it was just mudslinging and bickering back and forth until, finally, everyone was staying away.

Three years ago it was only parents coming. Then when I became president more teachers started attending the meetings, now we usually run about fifty. It is usually about half teachers and half parents. They do socialize a little, but usually during the social hour, you see teachers clustering together and you see the parents clustering together. I don't think they do much discussing of school problems.

I would like to see the parents that we do have as PTA members attending the meetings. Then, if the parents were there, and the teachers were there, a lot of the friction and the problems that we do have in school could be solved. And the PTA in the County could be a very powerful organization-- not powerful in the way of dictating, but a powerful organization for education.

The respondent cited above, an Indian woman, offered more explicit information about her view of White administrator quality in the district eight office:

The present superintendent takes the Great White Father attitude. Whenever we question any of his doings, he keeps telling us what they have done for our people. He takes the attitude that we should be on our hands and knees, thanking him all the time. When we do ask, or question any of the policies, he turns a deaf ear. He tells you he is going to take care of it but it is probably forgotten the minute we leave the room.

On the other side of the ledger this same respondent was critical of Menominee Indians for failing to initiate more profitable relations with White school officials. However, she saw in the emergence of a group of concerned Menominee parents some possible breakthroughs:

It's gratifying to see so many people. I'm going to use a term that I just heard today -- the common people, the common Indian people, as opposed to what they call here, the upper crust of the Indians.

To see all these common people coming to a meeting, there was no griping, they listened, they gave their opinions, to see them all worried and concerned about the education of their children, was wonderful.

For many years we've been hearing that Indian parents just don't care about their children. That isn't true. One of our biggest faults, as Indian people, is that we don't express ourselves in a group. We can talk individually to people, but when it comes to saying what you think and what you feel, and standing up in front of a group, I know, myself, I freeze right up. But I can talk to individuals on a subject.

Today, in the mail I received a pamphlet that is put out by the PTA about low income families finding it difficult in the school situation. Many of the things that the Parent Group is standing for is what the PTA is endorsing.

The respondent exhibited a great deal of sophistication in her understanding of the cross-cultural relationships between White school bureaucracies and Menominee Indian culture:

Starting with the school: I think the schools are geared to a White middle class society. Being geared for this, the teachers seem to be insensitive to Indian children's needs. As parents, we're not asking that our children be treated different or better, but that they be given the understanding that the White world and the Indian world are two separate worlds, and that you have to try to take the best from both of them. The teachers and administrators think that because we have been civilized for so long, that we naturally become White. That just isn't so. We're going to hang on to the little Indian culture that we do have.

I've always felt that if the Indian child has someone to identify with, someone who was important, if they knew some of their important Indian leaders of years ago, just as the White children have George Washington and Lincoln, it would solve a lot of their problems.

I think the parents, the older parents, not so much the younger parents -- build into these little children that you're Indian and just the way they say it, it is supposed to be something you are ashamed of, instead of telling their children, 'You're Indian, be proud of it!' If the White world would put in their textbooks, the history books especially two sides of the story, I think that it would help the children a lot.

When I was in school, I was ashamed of being an Indian, because I could only identify with some savage that was scalping some White settler. If they would tell the Indian child, or tell the White child: 'The Indians were like this because strange people with strange customs and strange dress were coming into their land, and tell them that, 'not having seen them before, the Indians of long ago didn't know how to react to them, and they did just what people do now all over the world: they tried to protect what was theirs.' But when you think of Indian, you naturally think of a savage with hardly any clothes on. But they don't say that the Indian didn't need to wear long dresses or wear fancy suits back then, that their little breechclouts or their buckskin clothes were good enough for them.

My husband and I have tried to teach our children to be proud that they are Indian and not to ever feel ashamed of this. We've tried to tell them about some of the famous Indians in our history. When they go to Shawano we tell them to be as friendly as they can to the children from Shawano, but still be as friendly as they can to the children from up here. If our children have Shawano friends, then the local children shun them. And if they have Indian friends, then their pals in Shawano stay away from them. The little children are really torn in two. They want to be friendly with everyone, but they can't be. That's a pretty big problem.

Then we have the problem of dressing. Some of our children don't have the clothes that the other children have, they don't have the extras that a White middle class child expects, and I think with all of these problems dumped on top of each other and snowballing, that by the time they get into high school, they have this 'I don't care' attitude.

One of the most vexatious problems in American public school systems is the various codes of conduct developed to manage relationships among and within the various cohorts. On the subject, the respondent was asked: "Are there problems in Middle and High school with Indian children,? Are they being suspended more frequently than what they are doing would seem to warrant?"

Yes, I think so. I understand that you can be suspended for chewing gum down there. Of course, we have the problem of the dress code. Most of our problem is that the dresses are too short. What they do is take the hems out. When I did question the principal on this, he said he had never ripped out a hem on anyone's dress. When you talk to the parents, they tell you he did. He says that he gives them a choice of either calling their parents to bring a dress down, which is eleven miles round trip, and sometimes more, if it is up in Neopit, or else go down to the home ec room and take the hem down and resew it.

I think they suspend them more. They are quicker to criticize our children than they are their own. Especially, if our children come in for a late slip, they're usually given a good dressing-down because they are late, but by the same token, a local Shawano child can come in, and probably be cuddled because he's late, and told not to do it again. It doesn't happen that way with Indian children.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Recognizing that the education of our youth is one of the primary concerns of our community, and that the community delegates its power to an elected school board; let it be known that in accordance with our Constitutional Rights the community reserves the right to withhold its sanction of policies that it feels are unfair, discriminatory, or not in the best interest of its youth.

Resolution

WHEREAS, the Indian people have for ages been free, democratic and happy people by nature and have been "learned" in the true sense of the word, there comes a time when these same free spirits must call for dramatic changes in a school system that stands in the way of their education.

WHEREAS, the present system neither enhances the Indian's self-concept nor prepares him for the real world in which he seeks to be an Indian while making a living in the predominant white middle-class society, and

WHEREAS, the present educational system is so structured as to prevent the local Indian community from being an integral and vocal part of the education of our youth.

BE IT RESOLVED that the citizens exercise their constitutional rights in establishing standards and policies to be administered by the school system.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the school system cease asking what is wrong with the Indians because of their lack of achievement and begin to ask themselves, "What is wrong with us that we are unable to meet the needs of Indian youth?"

Menominee County Parents and Students Committee for Better Education
(April, 1969)

Another Menominee respondent, a member of the parental group and a secretary in one of the Menominee County Public Schools, told of the sequential suspension of an Indian girl for:

Too short dresses, talking back to the teacher, skipping classes, boom! She got suspended. Now it's come out that this one teacher knocked her down one day and almost knocked her out. She was so scared . . . they took her to the nurse's office and had to revive her. She begged that girl not to tell her parents, and yesterday, when I was up to my sister's, she said that _____ had been trying to settle this out of court because my sister had a heart condition. The doctor said that she just can't go to court. But several people, including the teacher that knocked her out have been summoned, but now that they're settling her deal out of court, _____ is barred from High School. She can never go back, they will not accept her because of the suspension.

This respondent was asked whether she felt prejudice and unfairness were directed toward Menominees, particularly in the Middle and High Schools. Her response was of special interest because it indicated some school-related status problems among Menominees interested in academic achievement awards:

Yes, I'll tell you one thing. It was the week before I went to the hospital after my son got this PTA award for citizenship and scholarship. Up until then they were real friendly to us. When his name was mentioned and he got that award, some of the Menominees' had nothing to do with us anymore. Some of the parents just figured that their kids were going to walk off with everything. And when my son got that award, they just cooled right off to us.

This Menominee adult respondent was also asked, "Do you think the counselors do a very effective job?"

No I don't. My son was mentioning one boy who was short a half a credit that was keeping him from graduating. I know when we were on this banquet committee, when they submitted the names of the kids to be recognized, there was one boy on the senior list. They had a big black mark through his name and 'definitely not to be recognized'. If those counselors and teachers are on the ball, they should have known last September that some kids were going to be short a half a credit and that it was going to keep them from graduating. When Mr. _____ came the next night to pick up my son to take him to Neopit to the Study Center, I mentioned it to him, and he said, 'I'll look into it.' I guess this boy will go to vocational school to make up the credit. He'll get a diploma but it will be unsigned. And he was going to just quit when he found out about it. He told my son, 'The hell with it. I'll just quit.' My son told him, 'that's just what they want! Don't give them that satisfaction. Stay right there. People will think more of you if you stay right there. I know it will bother you, because it bothers me, and you are a good friend of mine, and I don't want you to do something like that, because I feel that if you do, the way you feel now, you could go out and raise complete hell and get yourself in a bunch of trouble. Stay in school and you'll come out on top in the end.'

A Menominee woman with a name well known in the County fleshed out some of the complexities of pressures and counter pressures acting on parents, school personnel and children in the schools:

I'm more familiar with the grade schools, but now we have two children at Middle School. We find that they have little day-to-day incidents, and possibly they don't even come home and talk about it very often. But they are subjected to a lot of pressure, not only by students from Shawano, but I'm talking about children's

attitudes . . . children don't know if they can accept someone just on an individual basis. I don't know if you found this, with other people telling you the same thing, but many parents I have talked to say their children do the same thing. They are not sure what side they want to be on, if they just want to associate with somebody from Menominee County. It is grouping: if you are from Menominee County, you associate with somebody from Menominee County. If you start associating with someone from Shawano, there are pressures from both sides. It isn't just on a one-to-one basis. This doesn't come from administration, but it certainly comes from surrounding area attitudes. And certainly from the homes. This is something I wasn't aware of on the grade school level, and I think it increases in high school.

One thing that I'm very concerned with is that we don't have enough counseling at Middle School. I don't know what the enrollment is, I'd say 500, at least, and we have one school counselor there. I don't think this is a sufficient number for the ratio of students. And I'm not sure, as far as the school administration is concerned, just what this counselor is supposed to be doing, specifically. But he or she could not possibly cover the full area, even a nominal amount. I do think now that there is going to be more parent participation and more asking of parent participation, not only on the level of grade school but on the high school level also. It seems that the problems that we have, increased from grade to high school, but I don't know about the high school other than what other parents tell me.

The same respondent, who was also a member of the Title III advisory committee, was asked, "As far as the grade school is concerned, and particularly Keshena, do you have any opinions as to the quality of the teaching and the kind of discipline there?"

We are going to have one of our children in the fourth grade and from observation I don't know how you can evaluate it. It is very difficult. I'd like to be there, but we've been concerned about other parents telling us about this particular teacher, and when we took it to the principal, he said that there wasn't anything we could do. They were aware of the weaknesses, but there weren't enough complaints. We took it to the superintendant the other night and he said she would be under scrutiny. He couldn't give us any answer, but at what point do you stop? This is one of the questions I'd like to know: Where do you draw the line, whether a person is doing well or not? And I'd like to know as a parent, could I find out what this whole fourth grade class was doing test-wise, which is really the only way we'd know. It's at least some basis. As a parent, I don't know what assurance I'll have that this observation isn't going to go for another year, because this person has a contract. We really don't know. You can have interest, but I don't know where this line is drawn.

These selections from lengthy transcribed tape recorded interviews with Menominee influential persons exhibit, to us, a high degree of understanding about the educational problems faced by all in Menominee County. Singularly apparent is a problem common to school-community relations virtually everywhere in America: the inability of concerned community members to significantly effect the functioning of school systems within acceptable frames of time, and the corresponding inability of school officials to affect significant operations in community behavior within acceptable time limits.

SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS: NON-INDIAN VIEWPOINTS

This section of the report will be concerned with school-community relations in Menominee County as viewed by non-Indian "influential persons". One of those interviewed was a White male holding a relatively high position in social services in Menominee County. He was asked, "What are some of the major difficulties of the people in Menominee County?"

They don't really seem to know how they can improve their own circumstances. They see what we all see on television -- the things other people have, and things that I'm sure they would like to have, too. But I don't think they really see how they can obtain these things through reaching a higher level of education of self-dependence.

Respondent was then asked whether he felt that this situation can create frustration in people:

Yes. I think that they haven't really . . . there's very little communication . . . I don't think the welfare department, for example, or Menominee Enterprises or the County Board here really communicate with the Indian people. I don't think that the agencies in the community are really aware of how people actually feel, what people are really experiencing and trying to have a better life for themselves and their children.

"In your contacts, I would assume that the matter of parental attitudes toward education would come into play as part of your work. What do you find are the attitudes toward education?"

It is hard to say. They talk about Indian parents not valuing formal education as much as we do. For example, the cultural aspect where evidently once the parents have really explained to their youngsters the importance of getting an education they apparently leave it up to the youngsters to go ahead and persist in getting an education. They may not get up in the morning to help a youngster get ready for school or go down to school to talk with the school about their child. They more or less appear to leave it up to the youngster once they have communicated to him the importance of it. It's always hard for us to know just how much the cultural factors are operating. I really don't think this is that large an element . . . the television is the over-riding influence . . . the thing that really conditions the parents and the children.

Several kids that I asked what they wanted to be when they grow up . . . will say, 'I'd like to be a doctor or an astronaut, or a woodsman.' Two extremes.

They do have influence from their parents about these . . . living where they are and so on. They certainly do come back to live in the County for all sorts of reasons . . . evidently people did come back to the County for the housing without much regard to the employment.

And the same non-Indian County Welfare administrator on the subject of the school system per se:

We [the Menominee County Welfare Department] have been increasingly concerned with what we see in the school system. It appears that they are extremely authoritarian, that the administration is authoritarian in nature, and that the principals probably don't have too much final authority, and that they seem to enforce their position by a great many rules. Evidently, the teachers and principals, in addition to the rules that are more or less specified by the school, put in their own rules, too, that the children must follow. But it appears that it is an extended authoritarian system, and the youngsters are told what to do, and are threatened with punishment if they don't do what they're told to do. There appears to be

no opportunity for discussion, no opportunity to come back and say how they feel about these rules or what these rules are apparently doing to them.

There's always a high rate of dropout of the Indian children over the years, and I know there is nationally, but I think perhaps a more serious problem here than the actual dropout rate is that there are many basically healthy children who would have the capacity for cooperating with the school administration that the school has actually antagonized, that are adversary to the school, and the energy of the children is engaged in playing games with the rules of the school or avoiding school rather than cooperating with the school in the direction of getting a good education.

What I've seen of some of the principals and of the administrator, I think that the adverse effect is just as great on the children of Shawano County as those of Menominee County. I think that the school administration is so completely authoritarian that the aspect of it is equally damaging to all of the children.

"How do you think the concerned Menominee Indian Parent Group got started?"

I really think that this group came about as almost a response to the authoritarian school system in particular, but also their inability to communicate to the school and I'd say, the welfare, the Enterprises and the County Board. The way this group started was a little extraordinary, but I think that the thing that the welfare department and the school in particular -- well, the Enterprises, too -- should take into account was the obvious dissatisfaction of the people in the community with the programs. If this many people that were concerned, and even if the welfare and the school and the Enterprises really are satisfied that they're doing an effective job, it is clear that the people don't feel that way. At least you can say that they've failed to communicate to the people what they're doing and why.

"In general, how does the school administration respond to this parental group?"

It was . . . it appeared . . . there's little question in my mind, from what I've seen of it, that they tried to destroy this group before it really had a chance to develop or to become established.

"What methods did they use?"

With the loss of various sorts of income. They threatened them with the possibility that the state legislature would not allow Menominee County to continue as a County. They threatened through the Enterprises primarily, through legislators, they threatened people with the loss of income from the leasing of the shoreline of the Wolf River for public fishing, for example, and they threatened with the loss of funding for education which actually hadn't been introduced in the legislature as far as I know . . . one legislator had said that he was going to do this, but hadn't . . . was afraid that the legislature would not approve this legislation because of the activity of the parent's group.

"Where did the school administration get all this power?"

I don't know. It appears that the school administrator went right up to the legislators that serve this community, and it appears that the legislator responded to whatever he communicated, and didn't really look beyond . . . they didn't seem to look at other connections, at other aspects . . . why did the group form, and what it was they hoped to achieve.

Like I said before, the reaction of the school administration was to threaten the people and more or less order them to cool it, that if they didn't, they would face the prospect of losing income at a time when they are certainly in need of whatever supplementary or additional income they can add to the people in the County, to the County government.

"Were people's jobs ever threatened?"

Yes. They were. I can't say that I've had that experience directly, but I've heard that others have been threatened.

"How would you explain the opposition to the Concerned Parents Petition?"

Some people have been surprised that there appear to be factions within the County. I don't think that they should be, because if you have this anywhere else, where you have people that would be identified with the establishment, and they appear to react just as violently to a spontaneous move of this nature as they would anywhere else. I really think, now that I've seen this for a period of weeks, that the members that went down to the one school board meeting, for example, that they were really trying to protect the type of status that they have with the people in Shawano. That they spent a great deal . . . that they've invested a great number of years to be accepted by the people of Shawano and be able to meet them on the street as equals and to get away from this stereotype of being inferior and now they appear to be greatly threatened with the loss of this, that Shawano would again look on the members of Menominee County as irresponsible or otherwise not equal to them in terms of managing their affairs.

"Was the petition in any way connected with the stockholders of Menominee Enterprises?"

Well, it appears that the Enterprises is very much out of touch with the people. The Enterprise is established in Menominee County and is, I suppose, the most obvious aspect of it. There's a great deal of evidence that the Enterprise is not in communication with the people, not knowing what the people are

experiencing, not at all responsive to community concerns, and not at all community oriented. It doesn't see any community responsibility. I really think that what we're seeing here is that the Enterprise has no way of gauging the mood of the people in the community, no way of knowing what these people are actually experiencing, not at all responsive to the desperate efforts of the people to try to maintain themselves, and to become stronger economically.

"Concerning the petition to dissociate the school systems between the two counties: Do you think the concerned parental group spurred this kind of action?"

Would they have done this if the Parent Group hadn't formed? I don't think they would have . . .

At another level of community interaction with the school, a White youth counselor for the state of Wisconsin made a series of interesting comments, many of which are borne out from data from other sources:

I've had a pretty good relationship with the counselors at the high school, but at the same time, there's still that underlying feeling of disparity between my role and theirs. They see me as being kind of their counselor -- I'm supposed to channel everybody into them, and to propose anything else is a threat to them. About two weeks ago, I received a notice from the principal's office, that I was no longer able to go to the school and talk to a student at the school unless I had written permission from the principal's office, and an agenda of information we were to discuss, and also I would not be able to leave the school until I passed on to the school counselor the gist of our conversation. I've not been to the school since that time.

As I see it, I think we're trying to take people of a different cultural background, trying to fit them into a mold which is predominantly White middle class. For example, the area of program or structure. The school has certain requirement for graduation. They are looking more in terms of long range goals. Their concern is with that which is immediate. If they find that they just can't get along with a teacher . . . many times this is true. . . then they will just walk out of school. One of the constant problems that has come up is this whole area of discipline. The school sees it in terms of shaping these Indians up . . . they're going to have to learn to live in the White world, and we'll use every means available to us to force this. Yet, the more they push, the more alienated the kids become. They've got these ridiculous rules on dress . . . the Indian boys that I see are not "hippies", but if they don't have their hair cut an inch above the eyebrows, they have to get it cut. And the dresses . . . girls' skirt hems have been ripped out . . . I think it is a total lack of sensitivity on the part of the school.

I talked to the truant officer . . . he's busting . . . for what I consider many times to be rather insignificant items. I saw a notice that any person caught chewing gum is automatically suspended for three days. I've never heard of this. or, if you have your shoes above the ankle, don't wear a belt, come to school late . . . you end up many times getting suspended, detention, there are many kids sitting around on detention every night . . . I know kids who have dropped out of school because they have 100 plus hours to make up -- they just wouldn't do it. The suspensions are completely out of hand . . . this is not only true regarding the Indian youth, but the White youth as well. One of the White girls in Shawano was telling me recently that it's absolutely fantastic what's going on over there.

I think the drop-out rate is too high for Indians. The district recently applied for federal funds because they said forty-four Menominees had dropped out of school last year and 18 non-Menominee. By proportion . . . twenty-five percent are Indian. I think that's plenty high.

In a way, I think there's a great deal of integrity on the part of Indian youth . . . if he just can't make it, he's going to drop out, he's not going to stay in there like many White kids would do, and just play the game. He can't see any meaning to the game, and he's not going to play it.

[Do teachers have a good understanding of Indians?]

Basically no. I appreciate their position, but they operate under the preconceptions of what education is all about. And they find that Indians do not respond as they would like them to, become frustrated, they assume that these kids are dumb. So many messages that are conveyed to the kid that he is dumb. I don't find the majority of the teachers to be sympathetic, but I find that true in all the schools . . . it's just a heck of a lot more prominent here!

[Is the school administration responsible to the desires and wishes of the Indian parents?]

Basically, I don't think so, because I feel they've got an operation, an institution to run, and the first requirement for running that institution effectively is order and discipline. Anything that the kids learn is purely incidental. I really think that it's not . . . it is certainly a problem between the White society and the Indian community, but I think that my feeling is that you find here, as well as in the black areas, an exposure problem that exists in all of our education institutions, from the bottom on up. We're not meeting the needs of kids. This is really evident, and what happens is that the administration just continues to push, push, push, and even when they get no response, educationally, they only know one way and they forge ahead.

[The parents . . . what kind of concerns do they express?]

The Indian parents are very reluctant to talk. Many times they don't even know. Their boy or girl gets kicked out of school, there still is prevalent among the Indians the idea that the individual has the freedom to make his own decisions. So they may say to the boy, 'John, we want you to get an education.'

But, if John gets kicked out of school, they don't rant and rave and beat the kid over the head, they say, 'that is your decision, John.' So they aren't always aware of what's going on with their own children. And when they are, they're somewhat reluctant to tell anybody, because I think maybe they're ashamed. They don't want to be accused of being a bad parent. Also, a certain amount of fear is involved. In the case of one woman who received letters from the principal that if her boys didn't shape up pretty soon, if they were going to be suspended in the future, that the family was in grave danger of losing those kids. That the court would take away the kids. I suspect this has happened in the past. All of a sudden you see John Smith around one day, and the next, he isn't, and . . . he went to Wales. He's been a problem to the school, the school's taken him to court, or he's gotten into some other problems outside of school

"Does it seem to you that given the population of Menominee County, that there's kind of an overabundance of kids who were sent along to Wales or State schools?"

I definitely think the percentage is high. I'm not sure what it is. The dropouts are high, and correspondingly you'd have to say that those that have been to Wales or Green Bay or some of the other penal institutions is quite high. It seems that every time you talk to a kid he's either been there or he's going there. They're almost resigned to it. The other day I picked up a boy going to Green Bay and he was telling me about some of his incarcerations and I asked him, 'What's it like being on the outside?' He said, 'What makes you think I'm on the outside?' He was going to school in Green Bay under the Huber Law. He said, 'I've been in an orphanage, jail's not much different.'

It appears to me that wherever there is a reservation or Indian community, that the immediate outlying White community has always kept some hard feelings about the Indians and vice versa. This is one of the interesting things, that a kid will go to High School and really be suspicious, and accuse the White people of being

prejudiced; he goes away to college and finds a completely new world, in fact, they may just wine and dine him to death, because he's an authentic, real American Indian. This is really a big deal, but when he was going to school here, he was a nobody. Just a dumb, drunken Indian.

"About how many students from Menominee County are attending college?"

As of today . . . as I mentioned to you previously one of the maddening things is that fact that you almost have to check on a daily basis, because the Indians just up and leave many times . . . but at last count, there was something like 20, 22 that were going to college. That's down from about 30 that started in the fall. Not too bad. Now when you compare the statistics that I have here, that between 1955 and 1965 only 5 in the whole County went to college, I think we're making some progress. I think that the Indian parents are becoming aware, as well as the students, that education beyond high school is a good thing.

The observations of a White High School counselor in Shawano:

I'm surprised that they come to school as well as they do. I'm surprised that a lot of them have as good attendance as they do. A lot of them don't, but that happens in the Whites as well as the Indians. Not as often in the Whites as the Indians, though. Environment's quite a thing -- you look at some of the places that they live, and then see them in school, you'd never guess that they came out of those homes. Certainly that plays a big part in them being successful, or not successful in school. They could never, in the past, see that they could go beyond high school, if they could ever go to high school because there wasn't enough money there. But recently the federal government has been pouring quite a bit of money into there --

now they can go on to school, if they really want to, regardless of what kind of home they come from. But there doesn't seem to be the drive that there should be. Although it's amazing how many do come to school well-dressed and clean -- you'd never think it to look at the homes.

And a second High School counselor, also White:

We are not to be handing out punishments and penalties but there's a board policy which involved the guidance department in discipline to this extent: First step the classroom teacher is to have a conference with the student and contact parents, and second the teacher is supposed to refer this youngster to a guidance counselor (who) talks to the youngster about his behavior, not with the idea that we would punish him, but with the idea that we ought to help arrive at some reason or background and possibly interpret this to this teacher, and then here a referral for suspension may be made. However, if there are some urgent reasons, you know, like if a child is doing harm to another student, for example, or seriously disrupting a classroom situation then it's possible for this counselor step to be by-passed.

The school, community and family conditions which give rise to the tensions, conflicts and confusions were viewed differently according to the backgrounds of the influential respondents. For example, a visiting White teacher in the County elementary and Parochial schools:

I can see them but they are very aloof and this, of course, is with the families that are environmentally deprived. And I think we suffer more from environmental deprivation more than cultural deprivation. If the children haven't had a stimulating home environment, good prenatal care for the mother, a good diet and this doesn't depend on money, it depends on what the mother knows about home management and how she manages the budget. Our children can't be expected to be as mentally alert as other children. And I'm sure you must have noticed this as you have gone throughout some of our folders that we have a great number of so-called border-line students. They aren't severely retarded enough to be placed in special education but we have a large number of children who you would have to consider slow learning children. It becomes the job of the school to gear the educational system to the needs of these children. And I'm not always sure that we have done our best at this. But I push on this and its coming, I think. But, it happens slowly and I think right here in the County now people want it done immediately. I think it is good to have the kind of involvement we've had but I think we have to be realistic about this. I would like to see them be more realistic about how this change occurs.

Or a White Middle School counselor:

There are kids in many families that are on their own from the age of two. Discipline problems and dropouts -- many of them in this group. There is little parental control and direction. Indians don't want to be in school. There are some positive effects when some teachers laid the rules on the line. This is a problem with non-Indians also -- the

ones in trouble have a lack of control at home. Probably a little larger percentage of Indian students. Most of the problems of Indian students are caused by environment. I have no statistics -- just observation. Many have no place to study at home. The Study Center is only open two nights a week. They have to drive from home to study.

If I were new here, I'd say the schools up in Menominee County aren't as good. But, I've been up there to the schools -- my wife worked there -- and I think they are good schools not as low as the test scores indicate. Does it go back to the home? Parents don't care, so kids don't care. By the time they get here, kids say, what do I have to look forward to? In Menominee County there's a shack back in the woods, I can hunt, I can fish, I can go on welfare, why should I sit here?

One boy last year told me he'd live off his brother. I said the brother would kick him out. Then he said, 'I'd go on welfare.' And he looked me straight in the eye and said, 'You know, I'll bet I'll make as much as you do.' You can't really argue with the fellow, because he is going to make as much as I do. He won't have to worry about making an 8:00 job, like I do. He won't have to worry about necessary rent payment, or making sure . . . maybe he would worry about making sure there's enough food on the table but maybe he wouldn't. Making sure there's enough clothes. One thing . . . last year when I came here. . . I didn't know what I was coming to, really . . . the only reason I came to Shawano was not because of Indian education . . . I came here, I was interviewed, and I was hired. I was hired at more than I could have made where I was. This is the first job I had applied for. We wanted to get back to Wisconsin . . . close to home, yet far enough from relatives.

But the thing that really surprised me last year was to see these Indian kids walking down the hall. After having been in some of the homes . . . you'd be surprised . . . they really look nice. You see some of the homes that they come out of . . . they just

built up there . . . I don't know how many . . . close to 100 . . . and so many of these people have moved into these new homes. But I made some home visits last year where I went five miles southeast of Keshena, then, a mile of two-lane track, then here was four walls and a roof . . . and this was it. And to see the kids from these homes, walking down the halls. This sure is quite surprising. They sure do. Now, where this comes from, I don't know. On the surface, I would have to say, it's parental concern for their kids . . . that their kids are dressed nice. Because from the clothes that they wear here in school, you can't tell any difference between the Indian and non-Indian. They all look nice. In some families I know, it is the older girl that does things. We had a girl here last year who was absent a number of times. Truant. And the reason was that she was getting clothes ready for the young kids so that they could go to school.

This same White respondent was asked, "Do you feel the people in Menominee County really recognize the problems they have educating their children?"

I think they are becoming more aware of it. When I interviewed here, I met the principal. He said, 'In about another generation, they'll see the need for education, and they'll want to finish school. Now it is still a problem. Although it is better now. I don't know the figures . . . he gave me a lot of figures as to how in the past, ten, twenty years the dropout rate has been pushed down. I think gradually, they're becoming aware of it. I can see that in parents I meet . . . they say, 'We want our children to go to school. We want him to finish high school and go to vocational school, or to college.' And some of the kids are talking about college whereas I understand . . . just what I was told . . . that several years ago, if you had one who thought about college at all, this was a lot. Now, some of these kids . . . I want to be this, etc. . . . I'd like to go on to college. So, more and more, it is becoming a realization.

"Do you think the people of Menominee County are really involved in the decisions that are being made about the education of their children?"

Not as much as I'm sure they would like to be. I'm sure that the school board could stand another one or two Indians. I know several of the school board members personally . . . not close, but I've had talks with them . . . the ones I know, I know they're very, very interested in Menominee County education. I would say they're good friends of the Indians for education purposes. I was involved in something with a present school board member . . . and I have all the respect in the world for her. I think she's a very sharp lady . . . I'm sure she does a more than adequate job . . . but again, what do we have? Nine members on the school board. I'm not even sure. I'm sure there could be more representation. I haven't really given it that much thought as to whether or not . . . I don't feel as though it would affect the education of district eight in any manner . . . we would continue to strive for better education in district eight . . . I don't think if we got . . . let's say four more members from Menominee County . . . I don't think it would change any of the general policies drastically.

A prominent member of the district eight school board, a White man, was one of our respondents. Data gathered from this man reinforced the truism that different experiences result in different perceptions of Menominee education. He was asked, "What do you consider the problems of Indian people?"

Inherent lack of aggressive motivation needed to compete in business and commerce. This is not to say that there are not a number of Indians who have been quite successful in this area, indicating that they can develop this motivation with appropriate attitudes.

Lack of adequate education tends to keep them in the lower income brackets. There is also a greater number of broken homes and poorer home environment than might be found in neighboring communities.

It is primarily the duty of the School Board as the representative of the State to educate Indian children as well as other children and it would seem that the less this was disturbed by other agencies or groups, the better.

A person employed under Title III by the University of Wisconsin at Green Bay commented upon school-community relations in the context of her own project:

What about consulting the parents? We're testing the children at Keshena all the time, we're working with the children at Keshena -- they know there's a Title III project going on . . . we're obligated to tell the parents what we're doing. I felt that Title III had a very definite obligation to inform the public as to what they were doing, even if it were ten minutes at a PTA meeting. I was told, parents never come, parents don't care, they won't come. I said, 'no one has to come to the PTA meeting; it is up to us to tell the parents what we're doing. It's up to them whether or not they come, but we have to give them the opportunity to hear what we have to say. It is our responsibility to let them know.

"And how does the district eight administration feel about innovation in the classroom?"

The administration is, in my opinion, extremely cautious. They talk about wanting innovation, we need innovation, they'll give you a big speech about how innovation is needed, which it certainly is, but they're extremely cautious about trying anything.

This holds back the teachers. They talk innovation, but to talk it and to allow it are very different things. They're waiting for a sure answer, a definite answer. You look for something that you think will be good, and you try it. You make a very, very educated guess. They keep saying, 'No, you are groping in the dark.' You don't grope in the dark, you look at the research, you look at what your needs are, you investigate other systems, you find what you think will be best for you -- you try it, you evaluate it, you revise it. A continuous process of evaluation and revisions, because you're never going to find a set answer. I think the administration has to stop being so cautious and has to be willing to try something else. You don't just go in and randomly try something. But if you think something's worked, you try, and you're ready to revise. I don't think they can think in this constant change.

This same White respondent, working as a consultant for Title III, later became involved in a complicated dispute with school officials and officials at the University of Wisconsin at Green Bay. The dispute became public, through the media, and did much to intensify emotions about Indian education, not only in the Menominee County area, but in other parts of Wisconsin. A Title I reading teacher (White) commented upon conditions in Neopit:

I was very upset when I came to Neopit at the beginning of the year to find that they only had one series of textbooks that was dated 1957. The teachers were very upset about this, too, but whenever they ordered, they were told that the principal would take care of it, and the principal apparently never did take care of it, and so this situation has continued. . . I thought that perhaps this was the situation all over until I took one day and went on a tour of all the other schools. At every other school in the district except Keshena there are four and five different series of textbooks -- modern, 1960 and above -- on every level. I was very upset to see this. I was told that one of the reasons why Neopit wasn't allowed to have any new textbooks was that a reading committee in Shawano was adopting a textbook for the whole district. This was fine. The

new school that was built in town received all new textbooks from the budget allotment for the new textbook adoption with the idea that the other schools would get the new books the following year. This was what the Neopit teachers had been told for the past three years. Next year there is no money in the budget for textbooks and nobody else, at least from what I've been told, will get any new textbooks. So Neopit will not get new books next year. Right now, Neopit is getting a few newer books because we are getting the castoffs from the schools in town, and that's exactly what they are. If you open the covers you can see: 'Discard, Lincoln School,' in some of them.

"Have you met many of the Menominee parents?"

Oh, yes. At PTA meetings. I met many parents at a meeting one night where parents got together 'under cover' because they were very concerned about many of the problems at the school. What they felt was perhaps some inappropriate use of federal money, what they felt was a whitewash job on a lot of things, and they were real concerned about it. I attended that meeting with the parents. They spoke out about what they felt, how they felt about the school. They indicated many, many what they felt were legitimate gripes, they didn't know what to do, they felt they had gotten turned off or turned away by the school administration, and they wanted to find a positive constructive way to convey the community's feelings to the school administration. There were members from the state department present at that meeting, he told them a way to go about this very organized, democratic ways, and for this, the people are being greatly suppressed, they are being threatened, and pressure is being put on them.

"What about organization in district eight? How are the lines of authority structured?"

I've seen it to the point where a person wanted to volunteer as an aide in the school; come in once a week to help the kids. I contacted the principal

who could not make the decision. He told me to go to the director of Title I. I went to the director of Title I, he could not make the decision; he referred me to the superintendent. The superintendent made the decision that no, we did not want an aide in our school, and it came back on down.

The respondent was clear about first steps to improve conditions at Neopit. When asked what should be done "immediately," she said:

The first thing I would do in Neopit school is fire every teacher up there. And I sincerely mean that. Number two, I would get some very good recruiting out to some of these campuses. Like in Madison, I'll bet there are scads of kids that are just graduating that are looking for programs to get into such as VISTA. I think some of them would love the opportunity to come up here and teach up here. I think they would be flexible, they would be open to ideas, they would be great for the kids. They would be young, and I stress the young, because I think it is important at this point.

I think there should be massive in-service education. Or, in-service training or sensitivity to all teachers in the district, not just at these schools, because the teachers in these schools are so looked down upon.

"By other teachers?"

By other teachers. Just as an example, at our education association, they were suggesting withholding contracts. And a teacher from one of the other schools in town, got up and said, "We already signed our contract and turned them in because our principal told us if we didn't we'd get sent out to Keshena or Neopit.

Little things like that, plus a school board member made the comment that -- again, this is hearsay, but this is what a teacher told me -- they didn't want to spend any money on equipment up at Neopit because they were low-caliber teachers anyway.

The same respondent on the dropout rate:

The total lack of relevance of the curriculum for Indian students. The very hostile attitudes displayed by teachers of Indian kids toward them. A bad system of rewards as far as . . . you know, we kind of encourage these kids to get an education because six years from now they'll earn a living, whereas the Indian is very oriented toward the present.

I think some of these goals and rewards . . . this system has to be altered a little bit to meet the Indian personality and disposition. I don't feel they feel wanted in the schools, especially the older kids.

On discipline at Neopit:

Neopit is much too rigid. Teachers up there are extremely concerned about discipline all day. They have self-appointed individuals who really take any kids to task who even get out of hand. In fact, there was at one point I complained to my principal because I got sick and tired of walking in Neopit school and seeing little kids lined up against the wall, facing the wall with their hands in the air, leaning against the wall. Because they were being punished.

I also complained about seeing kids get physically hit in the head. Little ones. At Neopit. So they're much more disciplined, but I really question some of the things that they do to discipline those kids.

On the matter of inferior curriculum materials and books at Neopit: "Did you bring this to the attention of the district eight superintendent?"

Yes, and he told me that he's never turned down an order and went into an elaborate song and dance about how many thousands of dollars they spent on textbooks. That's fine, but all you have to do is walk into the schools; and this is kind of a funny thing to say to him, cause he's been out at Neopit once this year for

a half-hour luncheon. And I mentioned this to him, too. How can he even talk about these schools? I don't even think he knows the route to Neopit! And he only have five schools!

Last year at Madison we had 40 schools and our superintendent had visiting day every Tuesday and he hit four or five of those schools, he walked in the rooms, he saw the boards, he knew what was going on. This guy doesn't know anything that's going on in his district. And yet he will suppress anybody that tries to tell him this. Or even indicate something that might be amiss with the critical person.

This White female's responses were perhaps more "radical" than most other non-Indian persons interviewed. To us, her perceptions of the situation were clear and accurate. It was unfortunate to us that the furor over her activities resulted in a loss of the respondent both to the Title III project and to the community.

FINAL COMMENTS

We chose to allow a selected sample of "influential persons" from in and around Menominee County to state their viewpoints on Menominee Indian education. We hope that this method has been satisfactory since there was no effective way to quantitatively code illuminous material derived from open ended interviewing. In the Final Report of this series on education in Menominee County, we will return to information gathered from influential persons and employ it where appropriate.

Influential Persons and
Menominee Education.
Sherarts, Harkins, Nordby.

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